Bismillahir Rahmaanir Raheem

In the Name of Allah,

The Compassionate Source of All Mercy.

Islamic Foundation of North America

http://www.ifna.net

Guide to Islam For New Muslims

By Yahiya Emerick

Assalamu 'alaykum, peace be with you.

We would like to welcome you to the world of Islam. After receiving so many requests from new and potential Muslims for Islamic information, we have decided to compile this resource guide to further your search for knowledge and to put the resources of the entire Muslim Ummah (community) within reach.

This resource guide covers four main areas:

- The first section is a summary of basic Islamic teachings and practices.
- The second section concerns advice for Muslims on the path to truth.
- The third section is a listing of the best books for a Muslim to read.
- And finally, a listing of basic Islamic terms that you, as a new Muslim, ought to learn is provided.

May your path to knowledge be fruitful and may your road to truth lead you to the right way. Ameen (Let it be so).

To become a Muslim you only have to sincerely believe in and say the following phrase:

"Ash hadu an la ilaha ill Allah wa ash hadu anna Muhammadar Rasul Allah."

"I declare there is no god but Allah and I declare that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

Section 1

Basic Islamic Teachings

I. Beliefs.

Islam has seven main beliefs. They are contained in the formula known as the Iman ul Mufassal. It goes as follows, "Amantu bil lahi wa mala-ikatihi wa kutubihi wa rasulihi wal yowm ul akhiri wal qadri, khayrihi wa sharihi min Allahi ta'ala wal ba'ith ba'ed al mowt."

In English it means, "I believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, Measurement, both the good and the bad are from Allah the exalted, and in life after death."

A. **Allah.** This is the name for "God" in Arabic. Allah is not a human, not a male and not a female. We only say the term "He" when referring to Him because there is no "It" in Arabic. All nouns are automatically masculine or feminine. Allah created everything and was never created. He is never born, He never has children and the human mind cannot encompass His magnitude and greatness. He is loving but just, merciful but stern. Only by surrendering to His will can we come into accordance with His universal will.

B. **Angels:** They are not human, nor male or female. They are the servants of Allah and never rebel against him. We believe in a devil-creature called Shaytan (Satan) but he is not a fallen angel. He is a creature called a Jinn who rebelled against Allah. Angels record our good deeds and bad and are behind the events of nature and enforce Allah's will in the universe, although He doesn't need their help.

C. **Books:** Allah has sent revelation to thousands of humans throughout history. Some of those revelations were organized bodies of teachings meant to be recorded as "books" whether written or oral to be handed on to future generations. We know the names of five of these books. They are: the scrolls of Ibrahim, (Abraham), the Taurah of Musa, (Moses), the Zabur (Psalms) of Dawud, (David), the Injeel of 'Esa (Gospel of Jesus) and the Qur'an of Muhammad. Only the last book has survived until the present day. All others have been lost or altered so much so that they are all but worthless.

D. **Messengers**: These are Allah's Prophets and Message-bringers to whom Allah gave revelation. Every nation and race on earth received at least one in the past. They all taught the same message: to surrender to Allah and do right. Thus we say they all taught Islam. The first was Adam and the last was Muhammad. The Qur'an mentions the name of 25 Prophets and Messengers.

E. **The Last Day:** Human history will end one day. Allah will end the earth at some future date and all human beings that ever lived will be raised up for Judgment Day. After each person's good and bad deeds as well as their beliefs are examined, they will be sent to either Paradise (Jannah) or Hell (Jahannam).

F. **Measurement:** Allah has measured the length of our life in this world, our economic status, where we will die, etc... The word "Qadr" is sometimes translated as destiny or pre-destination or even fate. But the word actually means "to measure."

G. **Life After Death:** Eternal life in either Heaven or Hell for our souls based on what we believed and did while we lived in the world. Some people will be taken out of hell and admitted to heaven when the term of their punishment is over.

II. Practices.

Islam has seven main practices in the life of a Muslim. Five of those practices are grouped together and are known as the Arkan al Islami, or Pillars of Islam. The following Hadith lists them as follows: "Buniyal Islamu 'ala khamsin: Shahadati an la ilaha ill Allah wa anna Muhammadar Rasul Allah. Wa ooqimus Salati wa i-ta azakati wa hajjil bayti wa saumi Ramadan."

In English it means: "Islam is built on five things: Declaring that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Establishing Prayer, paying the Charity, making a pilgrimage to the House and fasting in Ramadan."

A. **Shahadah.** Declaration of Faith. Saying, "Ash hadu an la ilaha ill Allah wa ash hadu anna Muhammadar Rasul Allah." "I declare there is no god but Allah

and I declare that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

B. **Salah.** Prayer. This is the ritual prayer that Muslims perform at five set times each day. To neglect any one of them counts as a sin. The names and times of each prayer are as follows:

1. Fajr. Before sunrise.

2. Zuhr. About a half an hour after noon.

3. 'Asr. About two to three hours before sunset.

4. Maghrib. Immediately after sunset.

5. 'Isha. After the last light of the departing sun is gone from the sky.

C. **Zakah.** Purifying Charity. It is the annual payment of 2.5% of our yearly economic accumulations, after expenses, for the benefit of the poor, orphans, the needy, etc...

D. **Saum.** Fasting. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims abstain from all food, drink, anger, sex, smoking and bad deeds from just before fist light until sunset. This is a training time for us to learn to control our gluttony, anger and bodily needs. We learn our mind is stronger than our urges, weaknesses and desires.

E. **Hajj**. Pilgrimage. A once in a life-time trip to Mecca to purify your soul and reconnect with our ultimate purpose in life. The month of Hajj is when millions of Muslims all over the world arrive to serve Allah wearing only simple, white clothes and no status or titles. We remember the real poverty of this world and the severity of the Day of Judgment.

The other two practices are known as Da'wah and Jihad. Da'wah means calling others to Islam and Jihad means to struggle in Allah's cause. That struggling can be physical, spiritual or mental. The word Jihad does not mean "Holy War."

III. Holidays.

There are only two official holidays in Islam. One comes at the end of Ramadan and is called the 'Eid ul Fitr. (Festival of the Fast Breaking). The other comes at the end of the Hajj and is called the 'Eid ul Adha. (Festival of the Sacrifice.)

Some Muslims celebrate such things as the birthday of the Prophet, (Mawlud un Nabi), or the 'Eid ul Ghadir (which is a much later holiday centered on 'Ali, the Prophet's cousin, whom a group of Muslims called "Shi'a" revere), but standard Islam (Qur'an + Prophet's sayings and example) doesn't seem to give any overt or tacit support to these holidays. The Blessed Prophet said in authentic sayings that there were only two holidays in Islam, 'Eid ul Fitr and 'Eid ul Adha. The commemoration of the Prophet's birthday is debated among Muslim scholars.

IV. Halal and Haram.

Halal items are allowed by Allah. Most foods in the world are Halal. Haram means forbidden by Allah. Haram foods are alcohol and other intoxicants, pork, carrion, most carnivorous animals, meat dedicated to idols. For the meat of an animal, other than seafood, to be Halal for a Muslim, it must be slaughtered in a specific manner. The process is called Dhabiha. Basically it is a similar procedure to the Jewish method of kosher preparation. Kosher meat is also allowed for Muslims, as per the Qur'an. Some Muslims believe that "supermarket" meat and fast food meat is also halal, but Allah said in the Qur'an that the meat prepared by the Jews and Christians is allowed, whereas almost no one in America practices Christianity anymore, as it was practiced in ancient times. Modern slaughtering techniques, with their attendant cruelty and unsanitary nature, do not pass the halal test for us. It is a bit of a hardship but we believe in the prevention of cruelty to animals and modern slaughterhouses are places of tremendous cruelty. There are detailed books on the subject.

There are also Halal and Haram ways to make money. Any business or activity that involves Interest-money is Haram as is any business involving gambling, alcohol, Haram foods or deceit.

V. Male/Female Relations.

Islam provides a code of manners for male/female interaction outside the home. It is impossible not to interact with the opposite sex in daily life such as in the workplace, school or shopping centers. Some very conservative Muslims have

this silly and misguided notion that men and women are forbidden to have any interaction unless they're married. Reading the Qur'an and Hadith, however, we get a different picture. The early Muslims, until recent times, had a relatively egalitarian attitude towards male/female relations. Muslims have only freaked out in the last two hundred years with isolationism and ultra-conservatism becoming rampant. Today's arch conservatives would have you believe that a woman's place is in the kitchen and nothing more, but this is not what you will find when you read about Muslim society in former times. Men and women can interact in legitimate settings such as in a business, market, school or social gathering provided they follow certain points of etiquette.

A. Women and men must be wearing clothes that fulfill Islamic requirements of decency. Men must be covered from the knees to the navel, and normal daily wear consists of some type of robe, or pant/shirt combo. A turban or some other form of a headgear is strongly recommended. Muslim men are required to have some sort of a beard (if they can grow one). Many secular minded Muslims do not wear a beard due to the influence of certain dominant cultures in the world which look down upon beards.

Women must be covered from their ankles to their necks and down to their wrists in loose fitting clothes. In addition, a head covering must be wrapped over the hair. This is called the Hijab, or scarf. (Khimar is a related term.) Face veils, gloves and socks are not required, even though some very conservative Muslims hold that it makes a woman more purified and sincere. (It is more a cultural trend than an authentic religiously sanctioned position.)

B. An unmarried man and woman should never be alone together in a room. No person should ever be alone with someone of the opposite sex unless they are married to that person.

C. Men and women are not to talk to each other in a soft or intimate-sounding voice unless they are married to each other. Women are to address men in a firm and even tone so that the men don't get any false ideas.

D. When meeting and greeting: Men shake hands and hug only other men. Women shake hands and hug only other women. (Unless they are married to each other, of course.)

E. Men and women who are not married to each other never touch.

F. If two people are interested in getting married, the woman should arrange for a male relative to act on her behalf as her representative. That way she doesn't have to feel pressured or undignified. If a woman doesn't have any reliable male relatives to represent her interests, she may choose another Muslim male, usually an Imam or other trusted person to act on her behalf.

VI. Names.

Islam does not require a person to change his or her name. The only case where a person should think about changing their name is if the meaning of their name is offensive. (Once a man came to the Prophet and introduced himself. The man's name meant "Downcast and somber." The Prophet suggested he change his name to a better once such as Abdur Rahman: "Servant of the Merciful.")

Many Muslims like to take on Islamic or Arabic-style names as an expression of their affiliation, but this is not required. An Arab name is not always an Islamic name. Names identified with Islam exclusively usually have some relationship to being a servant of Allah or to the Prophet and the most famous Muslims around him.

There are many books which give lists of names associated with both Islam and Muslim culture. Some examples of currently available books are:

1. A Dictionary of Muslim Names.

2. The Book of Muslim Names.

3. A Digest of Muslim Names. Amana Publications.

4. Names for Muslim Children.

VII. Islamic Phrases.

Islam has its own key phrases to use in daily life. Some of these are listed below along with the times to use them.

1. When starting to do something: "Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem."

(In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.)

2. When mentioning something that will be done in the future. "Insha'llah." (If Allah wills.)

3. When praising something say, "Subhanullah." (Glory to Allah.)

4. When in pain or distress. "Ya Allah." (O Allah.)

5. When appreciating something say, "Masha-Allah." (As Allah willed.)

6. When thanking someone. "Jazakullah." (Allah reward you.)

7. When you see something bad. "Nowthzubillah." (Allah protect us.)

8. When saying you're sorry to Allah for a sin. "Astaghfirullah." (Allah forgive.)

9. After sneezing or when you're happy about something. "Alhumdulillah." (Praise Allah.)

10. When meeting someone. "Assalamu 'alaykum." (Peace be upon you.)

11. Replying to the above greeting. "Wa 'alaykum assalam." (And upon you be peace.)

12. When hearing about a death or tragedy. "Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajiun."

(To Allah we belong and to Him we return.)

13. When giving in charity. "Fee eemanullah." (In Allah's faith.)

14. When taking an oath. "Wallah." (I Swear to Allah.)

15. If someone sneezes and they say, "alhumdulillah," you reply with, "Yarhamakullah." (Allah have mercy upon you.) The sneezer will reply back, "Yehdikumullah" which means, "Allah guide you."

Section 2

Advice for Muslims

Books for Learning

After reviewing hundreds of books, we have selected the following materials as the best in quality, writing style, accuracy and content for Islamic education.

Part A

The Best Qur'an Translations

1. **The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an.** Translated by 'Abdullah Yusuf Ali. Amana Publications.

> **Strengths:** It is very easy to get, the deluxe edition contains the Arabic text and has very nice commentary. It is a standard translation used all over the world. You can also find this translation with a transliteration sometimes.
>
> **Weaknesses:** The English translation is in old style English, some translated passages are not clear. Cost: Between $10 and $20 depending on the size and style of printing.

2. **The Noble Qur'an.** Translated by Muhsin Khan and T. Al Hilali. Dar ul Ihya.

> **Strengths:** The English is sort of easy to read except for the annoying and endless parenthetical notes. It has the Arabic text printed very sharply. It's accuracy is good.
>
> **Weaknesses:** The translators have put some of their own opinions in the footnotes and parenthetical notes in the translated text that are not necessarily true. For example, they give the impression that women are not allowed to pray in the Masjid (Mosque) and that face-veils and gloves are required for Muslim women to wear. Both of these things can be proven wrong by the sayings of the Blessed Prophet. But besides a few seemingly anti-women oriented opinions, the translation reads smoothly. Cost: The book comes in many sizes from tiny to large. Prices vary from $10 to $30.

3. **The Glorious Qur'an.** Translated by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall.

> **Strengths:** It is available everywhere, oftentimes for free.

Weaknesses: The English is so hard to understand that it's almost impossible to read. Cost: Free up to $20.

4. **The Noble Reading.** Translated by T.B. Irving.

Strengths: It is in fairly modern English. It is attractively printed.

Weaknesses: The English is often awkward and there are many unusual words used, e.g. sprites, etc... Cost: $10-$30.

5. **The Holy Qur'an as Explained by Allamah Nooruddin**. Translated By A. and A. Omar.

Strengths: The book is nicely printed with a leather cover. It "feels" holy because of its meticulously designed presentation. The translation is very, very clear. Much clearer than any other translation.

Weaknesses: Some of the translated verses are not entirely accurate to the meaning or understanding of the majority of Muslims. The translators belong to a sectarian group outside of traditional Islam. Cost: $10-$20.

6. **The Message of the Qur'an.** Translated by Muhammad Asad. Dar ul Andalus.

Strengths: This is the most comprehensive, single volume translation and tafseer you will ever find in one volume in English. It is excellent, to put it mildly, if your interest is to understand the context of revelation and the fine details behind Qur'anic teachings.

Weaknesses: It is a hard to find book. Some of the tafseer glosses over more difficult concepts making it harder to understand what is actually being said. It is Hardcover only and is 8.5 X 11 inches in size. Cost: About $50.00 on average.

7. **Towards Understanding the Qur'an.** Multiple Volumes. Translated by A.A. Maududi and Zafar I. Ansari.

Strengths: Very clear English. Very detailed commentary. Very accurate and reliable.

Weaknesses: It comes in multiple volumes. The cost is high and not all volumes are available yet, but it is worth the money as far as

detailed learning is concerned. A one volume translation is now available.

8. **El Coran.** Spanish Translation by Abdel Ghani Melara Navio. This is one of the only Spanish translations done by a Muslim. The other Spanish translation with the same name is done by a Christian named Julio Cortes. Only the Muslim translation should be used because Julio Cortes declared that he wanted to distort the Qur'an in Spanish. (Read his preface and Intro in Spanish.) A new translation by Amana is now available. We will review it shortly.

9. **The Qur'an.** Translated by Muhammad Farooq Malik. (of Texas) This translation has been chosen as the easiest to read by various groups of Muslim teenagers I have presented it to. Although there is no index and the introductory notes are not as detailed as other translations, it is probably the best translation to give to native speakers of English and to Muslim teenagers.

Strengths: Clear, easy to read style. Teenagers prefer its language to any other.

Weaknesses: No index, odd notes placed within the text, odd style of numbering verses and over-wordy Surah introductions. The organization is sometimes unclear and the size of the book is too large and unwieldy.

10. **The Qur'an**. Translated by M.A.S. Abdul Haleem. Published by Oxford University Press.

Strengths: This is a fairly clear translation in English.

Weaknesses: It reads a bit dryly at times, and the grammar choices are sometimes awkward. There isn't really any peripheral material such as a good index, glossary, etc...

11. The Holy Qur'an in Today's English. Translated by Yahiya Emerick.

Strengths: This work, which is due to be published in 2008, is in the easiest to read English yet (without being simplistic or demeaning to the reader.) It has a huge amount of commentary that gives reasons for revelation in detail, as well as historical information on the development of doctrines, ancient peoples referenced in the Qur'an and more.

Weaknesses: It is not published yet, though the manuscript is finished and is under review by Islamic scholars arranged by ICNA.

There are other Qur'an translations available, but they either suffer from choppy English and bad grammar or are difficult to get. Examples include those by Shakir, Ahmed Ali, Ameer Ali, Daryabadi, etc.. Beware of non-Muslim translations. They distort the meanings of Qur'anic verses on purpose and even admit to doing it in their introductions just so they can insult Islam. Some non-Muslim translations are by N.J. Dawood, Rodwell, Sales, Arberry and others.

Part B

The Best Books For Learning Islamic Beliefs

1. **What Islam is All About.** By Yahiya Emerick.

Covers everything. Need we say more.

2. **Islam: Beliefs and Teachings.** By Ghulam Sarwar.

Good basic overview. PB

3. **Revolution by the Book.** Imam Jamil Al Amin.

Good basic overview. PB

4. **Fate and Predestination.** Sheikh Muhammad al Sharawi.

Best book on this difficult subject.

5. **Ihya Uloom ud Din.** Imam al Ghazali.

An excellent classical work on Islamic beliefs and how the thinking person lives them.

6. **The Remembrance of Death and the After-Life.** Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad al Ghazali.

Pretty much the best book for issues on life after death.

7. **Let Us Be Muslims.** Abul A'la Maududi.

Explains the need for sincerity and also goes over the significance of our practices.

8. **Islam in Focus.** Hamuddah Abdel Ati.

Although the writing is a little dry, it is a good general reference.

9. **The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam**. By Yahiya Emerick.

A complete overview of Islam from start to finish.

10. **The Complete Idiot's Guide to the Koran**. Sheikh Sarwar.

A good overview of the Qur'an's major themes in modern terminology.

Part C

The Best Books For Learning the Prophet's Life and the Lives of His Sahaba. (Companions)

1. **The Life of Muhammad.** M. H. Haykal.

Extremely detailed and fun to read.

2. **Muhammad.** By Martin Lings.

Reads like an old-style novel. Not always entirely accurate.

3. **The Life of Muhammad.** Tahia Ismail.

Very good book.

4. **Al Raheeq al Makhtum.** The Sealed Nectar.

Very good, but HB only.

5. **Companions of the Prophet.** 2 Vols. Abdul Wahid Hamid.

The best books on the subject in English.

6. **God-Oriented Life.** Maulana Wahiduddin Khan.

This book will change your life for the better. A must read.

10. **Muhammad**. By Yahiya Emerick.

A bio that reads like a novel.

Part D

The Best Books For Learning Arabic

1. **Easy Steps in Arabic.** Abdul Wahid Hamid. MELS. Beginner level. Booklets, cassettes.

2. **Access to Qur'anic Arabic.** Abdul Wahid Hamid. MELS. Advanced Level. Books and cassettes.

3. **Arabic Grammar Made Easy.** Abu Ameenah Bilal Phillips. Intermediate Level. One book.

4. **Arabic Writing Made Easy.** Abu Ameenah Bilal Phillips. Intermediate Level. One book.

5. **Mastering Arabic.** J. Wightwick and M. Ghaafar. Intermediate to Advanced Level. Focuses on spoken Arabic more than Qur'anic Arabic, though. One Book and two cassettes.

6. **Elementary Modern Standard Arabic.** U. of Michigan. Available from Kazi Publications. It is an organized course but a teacher is required to get the full benefit of its broad scope.

Part e

The Best Books of Hadith (Prophet's Sayings)

Many Muslims like to get an entire set of the main hadith collections such as Bukhari or Muslim, but there is a more cost-effective way to get a lot of authentic ahadith. There are many collections put together by different scholars that take Hadiths from all the six main collections of Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, An Nisa'i and Abu Dawud. They are listed as follows:

1. **Riyadh us Saliheen.** Compiled By Imam An Nawawi.

2. **Mishkat ul Masabih.** A hadith collection.

3. **Summarized Bukhari.** (Hadith collection in one volume) by Al Hilali and Khan.

4. **A Study of Hadith.** By Khalid M. Shaikh. (For understanding Hadith terms, etc...)

5. **Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development and Special Features.** Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqui.

(The best book for those seeking an in-depth book into how the Hadith were recorded and the sciences around it.)

Part f

The Best Books For Spiritual Reading

1. **Inner Dimensions of Islamic Worship.** Imam Abu Hamid Muhammad al Ghazali.

2. **Thinking About God.** Ruqaiyah Waris Maqsood..

3. **American Islam.** Richard Wormser.

4. **On Disciplining the Soul and Breaking the Chains of the Two Desires.** Imam al Ghazali.

5. **Struggling to Surrender.** Jeffrey Lang.

6. **Even Angels Ask.** Jeffrey Lang.

7. **Jewels of Remembrance.** Camille and Kabir Helminski.

8. **Living and Dying With Grace.** Trans. by Thomas Cleary.

9. **The Alchemy of Happiness.** Imam al Ghazali.

10. **The Road to Mecca.** By Muhammad Asad.

11. **Remembrance and Prayer.** Muhammad al Ghazali.

12. **Forty Hadith Qudsi.** Imam an Nawawi.

13. **Daughters of Another Path.** Carol Anway.

Part G

The Best Books For Special Topics

1. **How To Tell Others About Islam.** By Yahiya Emerick. (Da'wah, or Islamic Outreach)

2. **The Bible, Qur'an and Science.** By Maurice Bucaille. (Science and Islam)

3. **The Islamic Nation.** Ali Nawaz Memon. (Politics)

4. **Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery.** Adib Rashad. (History)

5. **Imam Bukhari's Book on morals and Manners.** Imam Bukhari. (HB) (Hadith)

6. **The Proper Conduct of Marriage.** Imam al Ghazali. (Marriage advice for men)

7. **The Muslim Marriage Guide.** Ruqayyah Waris Maqsood. (Marriage advice for women and to a lesser extent, men)

8. **The Muslim Woman's Handbook.** Huda al Khattab. (Everyday women's Issues)

9. **The Evolution of Fiqh.** Abu Ameenah Bilal Phillips. (History of Fiqh)

10. **The Child in Islam**. Norma Tarazi. (Children/Family)

11. **Bent Rib.** Huda al Khattab. (Women's Issues)

12. **Reliance of the Traveler.** Trans. by Nuh Ha Mim Keller. (Fiqh)

13. **The Lawful and Prohibited in Islam.** Yusuf al Qaradawi. (Fiqh)

14. **Hans/Wehr Arabic-English Dictionary.** (Its the most useful Arabic/English Dictionary)

15. **The Choice.** 2 Vols. Ahmad Deedat. (Comparative Religion)

16. **Covering Islam.** By Edward Said. (Media and Islam)

17. **Jesus a Prophet of Islam.** By M. Ata ur Rahim. (Comparative Religion)

18. **The Myth of the Cross.** A.D. Ajijola. (Comparative Religion)

19. **Subverting Islam.** Ahmad Ghorab. (Islam vs Misinformation in college)

20. **Al Ahkam as-Sultaniyyah.** Abul Hasan al Mawardi. (Islamic Government at Work)

21. **Fiqh us Sunnah.** 5 Vols. Sayyid Sabiq. (Excellent Fiqh reference books)

22. **In Search of Islamic Feminism.** Elizabeth Fernea. (Women's Issues)

Part H

Videos for Learning

1. **Living Islam**. 6 Volumes. Akbar Ahmad. Astrolabe.

2. **Women in Islam.** 2 Volumes. Astrolabe.

3. **The Message.** Astrolabe.

4. **The Book of Signs.** Sound Vision.

5. **The Qur'an and Space Sciences.** Astrolabe.

6. **The Guests of God.** Astrolabe.

7. **Muhammad the Last Messenger.** Astrolabe.

8. **Salat.** Astrolabe.

9. **Hamza Yusuf: On Islam and Muslims.** Astrolabe.

10. **Jesus and Muhammad: A Comparative Study.** Ahmad Deedat.

11. **Is the Bible the Word of God?** Hamza Abdel Malik. Astrolabe.

12. **Islam: A Closer Look.** Astrolabe.

13. **Pathways to Islam.** Astrolabe.

14. **Christ in Islam.** Ahmad Deedat. Astrolabe.

15. **The Making of the Last Prophet.** Yusuf Islam. Astrolabe.

16. **Americans Becoming Muslims.** Aminah Assilmi. Astrolabe.

Part I

Audios for Learning/Enjoyment

1. **We are Muslims.** (Children's' Songs) Astrolabe

2. **The Most Beautiful Names.** (Very nice Islamic Chanting) Astrolabe

3. **The Easy Way to Learn the Last 14 Surahs.** Astrolabe

4. **Adhan and How to Make Wudu and Salat.** Astrolabe

5. **Choosing Islam: Sahaba and Sahabiyat as Our Role models.** Hamza Yusuf/Yusuf Islam.

6. **The Life of the Last Prophet.** Yusuf Islam. Sound Vision.

7. **The Fundamentals of Islam.** Abu Ameenah Bilal Phillips. (Lecture) Astrolabe.

8. **What Every American Should Know About Islam and Muslims**. Jeffrey Lang. Astrolabe

9. **Islam in America: Past, Present and Future.** Imam Abdullah Hakim Quick. (Lecture) Astrolabe.

10. **Introduction to Islam and Muslims in North America.** Imam Abdullah Hakim Quick. (Lecture) Astrolabe.

11. **Deeper Roots: Muslims in the Americas Before Columbus**. Imam Abdullah Hakim Quick. (Lecture) Astrolabe.

12. **Muslim Character.** Abu Ameenah Bilal Phillips. (Lecture) Astrolabe.

13. **Anything from Ahmad Deedat if your interest is comparative religion.****Anything from Ahmad Deedat if your interest is comparative religion. Anything from Ahmad Deedat if your interest is comparative religion. Anything from Ahmad Deedat if your interest is comparative religion.** Available everywhere.

Section 3

Where to Find Learning Materials

Recommended Bookstores

2. Sound Vision

US & Canada: Orderline: 1-800-432-4262; Phone: 312-226-0205; Fax: 312-226-7537; email: info@soundvision.com
Mail: P. O. Box 4563, Chicago, IL. 60680, USA

3. Astrolabe

201 Davis Dr. Sterling, VA 1-800-392-7876

4. Noorart

Richardson, TX

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National Islamic Organizations

1. ISNA (Oriented towards organization of Muslims in North America)

PO Box 38, Plainfield, IN 46168 1-317-839-8157 www.isna.com

2. ICNA (Oriented towards Indian sub-continent concerns)

166-26 89th Ave, Jamaica NY 11432 718-658-1199

Free Islamic Question/Answer service at 1-800-662-ISLAM www.icna.com

3. ISC (Sufi oriented)

607A W. Dana St, Mountain View, CA 94041 1-888-ASUNNAH
www.sunnah.org

4. American Muslim Council (Political-action oriented)

5. Islamic Assembly of North America (Very conservative, Salafi oriented).

6. World Ministry of W.D. Muhammad (Oriented mostly towards African-American concerns. Holds a major convention annually.)

7. Muslim American Society (MAS)

Magazines

1. **Islamic Horizons** (National issues of concern to Muslims.)

PO Box 38, Plainfield, IN 46168 1-317-839-8157

2. **The Message** (Da'wah-oriented with some emphasis on politics and social issues.)

166-26 89th Ave, Jamaica NY 11432 718-658-1199

3. **Al Jumu'ah** (Conservative approach, focuses on beliefs and Fiqh.)

PO Box 5387 Madison, WI 53705 608-277-1855

4. **Crescent International** (Politics.)

300 Steelcase Rd West #8, Markham, Ontario, Canada L3R 2W2 905-474-9292

5. **The Muslim Magazine** (Cultural and Spiritual side of Islam (Sufism) with a nice variety of content.)

607A W. Dana St, Mountain View, CA 94041 1-888-ASUNNAH

One free sample copy upon request.

6. Azeezah Magazine. (Women's magazine)

Section 4

Basic Islamic Terms

Every way of life has its own vocabulary. This enables people to communicate about detailed topics using only a few key words. It is important that Muslims learn the vocabulary of Islam so that we all know what we're talking about. This unites us as Muslims and brings us closer to a sense of belonging to the same community.

Abdul: This means "Servant of." Many Muslims like to change their names from non-Muslim names to Muslim names. A favorite choice is Abdul. But who is the person a servant of? You must always have something after "Abdul." The place to look is in the 99 Names of Allah. Allah has many names, such as Wadud (the Loving), Malik (the King), Rahman (The Merciful), Hakim (the Wise.) Just add one of those after Abdul and you become "The Servant of _______". (For example: Abdul Khaliq: The Servant of the Creator.) etc...

Adab: Manners.

Adhan: (Athzan) The call to prayer.

Ahl al Kitab: This means the "People of the Book." Allah uses this term in the Qur'an to refer to the Jews, Christians and any other people who received revelation from an authentic Prophet in the past. Because the Ahl al Kitab lost their revelations and twisted the teachings they had, Allah sent one last Messenger to the world, the Prophet Muhammad. He brought the Qur'an from Allah. The Ahl al Kitab are called to believe in Allah's last message. To repeat: their own message has been lost or changed so much that there is very little of Allah's truth left in it. The Bible is not the word of Allah. It is a book made up of people's writings that was put together by Europeans in the year 325 at Nicea. That's 300 years after the time of Prophet Jesus ('Esa).

Ahmadiyya: A sectarian movement that began in India over one hundred years ago. They believe that one man named Ahmed Ghulam is a new prophet from

God.   Their worldwide headquarters are in Qadian, India, and they have missions worldwide.

Akhee: My brother.

Akhirah: The next life.

Akhlaq: Your character and behavior.

Alhumdu lillah: All Praise is for Allah.

'Alim: A scholar. The plural is 'Ulema.

Allah: The name for God in the Arabic language. (Literally: THE GOD). Muslims prefer to say "Allah" no matter what language they speak because in Arabic it is a stand-alone word. In other words, you can't make it masculine or feminine, plural or whatever. In English you can change "God" to Gods, Goddesses, Demi-God, etc... There is no way to do that in Arabic to the name, Allah.

Islam teaches that Allah is not a male or a female, nor is He black or white. He is not even a human like us. We only use the term "He" when we refer to Him because their is no "it" in Arabic and it seems disrespectful to call Allah an "it" in English. Allah sometimes refers to Himself as "We" or "Us" but don't be mislead. In many languages, (including English) a single being can call himself a "We" if he wants to so that it emphasizes his power. Allah is everywhere and nowhere. He is never tired and He never needs a "rest." He is Loving and the upholder of justice and He is the Source of Creation.

Allahu Akbar: "Allah is the Greatest." This is the universal catch-all phrase of Muslims. When a Muslim shouts, "Takbeer" (Who's the Greatest!) everyone replies with "Allah Akbar!"

Amir: This means a leader. The Prophet said every group of Muslims must make a leader among them, even if they were only three in number. An Amir is not a dictator and can't just order people around, however. He must also be elected by the consent of the majority. Because Allah said believers consult each other in their affairs (shura), the Amir must listen to the opinions of the Muslim group and take them seriously. If an Amir begins to clearly go against Islamic teachings, then the Muslims must elect a new one.

Angels: In Arabic they are called the Mala-ika. They are created from light energy. Their only purpose is to serve Allah. They are behind the forces of nature. Some Angels are given the job of watching humans and noting their deeds for judgment day. Angels can take on physical form, sort of like a

hologram, and can appear as humans or whatever. They are all good and never disobey Allah. They are not male or female. Christianity teaches that some angels went bad and that's where Satan and the devils came from. Islam teaches that this is not true. Angels are also not people running around in white robes with halos over their head.

Ansar: The helpers. The basic reference is to the new Muslims of Medina who helped the Prophet and the Meccan Muslims after they fled Mecca.

Arabic: A language which originated in the Middle East, specifically in the Arabian peninsula. It is the language Allah chose to reveal His last revelation to the world in.

Arkan al Islami: This means the Pillars of Islam. There are five main practices or "pillars" in the life of a Muslim.

Assalamu 'alaykum: "Peace be upon you." This is the universal Muslim greeting. The Prophet said that Muslims must use this greeting when they meet. There are also verses in the Qur'an about it. If a person approaches a group, the person should say it first. A younger person should greet an older person first. The reply is "Wa alaykum assalam." "And upon you be peace."

Ayah: A verse of the Qur'an. The word literally means a "sign." The plural is Ayat.

Bahais: A sectarian movement that grew out of Shi'a Islam, but then it broke away to form its own path. Bahaiism is basically a hybrid of Islamic philosophy wedded to a universalist outlook. Their headquarters are in Haifa, Israel.

Barzakh: The time in between our death and the day we are raised up for judgment. Our souls will be in "storage" or Barzakh. The word literally means, "Partition" or "Dividing Line."

Bid'a: This means "Innovation" or "Unauthorized Changes." The Prophet forbade people from making any changes to the teachings or practices of Islam. He said such things and people would go to the Hell fire.

Da'wah: This means calling people (to Islam). If you're talking to someone about Islam you're doing Da'wah. A Da'i is the person who does Da'wah.

Deen: Way of Life. Islam is not a religion, it's a way of life.

Dhikr (Thzikr): This means to remember Allah. When you repeat words or sentences over and over so you can meditate on Allah and cleanse your mind,

you are doing or making dhikr. Common dhikr phrases are: "La ilaha illa Allah" (There is no god but Allah.) "Subahanullah wa Bihumdeehee" (Glory to Allah and His is the Praise.) Saying that last one 100 times gets all your sins forgiven according to the Blessed Prophet. There are many more. Many Muslims like to get those prayer beads to help them keep count but the Prophet said you get more reward if you do it on your fingers alone.

Du'a: This means to call on Allah. Whenever you ask Allah for something, whether out loud or inside, you are calling on Him. You can make du'a in any words, in any language and Allah has promised to respond, although in a way we might not expect. Many Muslims like to learn some of the du'as that the Prophet said, but you can use your own words to talk to your Maker.

Dunya: This world. "Hayatud Dunya": "The life of this world."

'Eid: (Or: 'Id.) The Muslim holiday. There are two Eid's. One at the end of fasting in Ramadan is called Eid ul Fitr. The other after the Hajj is over is called Eid ul Adh ha.

Fard: Something you must do in Islam. Something that is required by Allah for us to do.

Fatwa: A scholar's opinion or judgment on an issue related to Islam. It is not binding on a Muslim if there is doubt about it or it can be shown to be faulty. Only a recognized scholar, or 'Alim can issue Fatwas and other scholars must investigate the veracity of their basis.

Fiqh: The science of understanding the Shari'ah. In the past small groups of people with similar opinions about the Shari'ah joined together and formed intellectual clubs called a Math-hab. Today there are five big groupings of these Madh-habs. Shaf', Hanbali, Maliki, Jafari and Hanafi. Not all Muslims accept the Jafari school as valid due to technical reasons. A Muslim can follow the ideas of any one of them or none of them at all. After all, we have the Qur'an, the sayings of the Prophet, the sayings of his companions and our brains. Don't be afraid to use them.

Ghusl: A full shower. A Ghusl is required after any sexual discharge or activity before prayers can be offered again. A Ghusl is highly recommended on Fridays before going to Jum'ah prayers.

Hadith: A saying or report by or about the Blessed Prophet. The most reliable collections of Hadith are named after the scholars who collected them in the early days of Islam and checked on them for accuracy. They are: Bukhari,

Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, An Nisa'i, Ibn Majah. There are some good books that take Hadiths from the main six and group them by topic. Those good resource books are as follows: "Riyadh as Saliheen" "Mishkat ul Masabih" and "Al Muwatta."

Hafiz: (Hafithz) A memorizer or guardian of the entire Qur'an.

Hajj: The pilgrimage to Mecca.

Halal: Allowed for a Muslim.

Haram: Forbidden for a Muslim.

Hijab: The scarf a woman wears over her head. Some Muslims who like to compromise their beliefs say it's not required in Islam. It is, however, required and all women must wear it. The face-veil (niqab) is not required, but some women like to wear it. Islam does not require a woman to wear gloves or socks but some very conservative Muslims try to teach this. This is Bid'a. They didn't even have gloves, for example, in the Prophet's time in Arabia.

Hijra: To migrate. This term refers firstly to the great migration of the Muslims in the year 622 from the hostile city of Mecca, which was controlled by idol-worshippers, to the safer city of Madinah (then called Yathrib) where Islam could exist freely. The Islamic calendar begins with the Hijra as the first year.

'Ibadah: This term is often translated as "worship" but it is not a correct translation. The word worship in English just means praying and bowing, like worshipping in a church. But the term 'Ibadah literally means "service" and it comes from the root word, "to serve." When we say that Islam considers all life to be 'Ibadah, we mean that our whole life should be lived in the service of Allah. We are here to serve Allah. In Islam, any good deed, action or thought, even just holding a steady job or smiling at someone is considered doing 'Ibadah for Allah.

Iftar: The meal you eat after sunset in Ramadan. Suhoor is the light breakfast before first light in the morning during Ramadan.

Imam: Literally: leader. Although most Muslims take this term in the sense of a leader of the prayers, it does apply to the group leader outside of prayer as well. An Imam must be elected by the Muslims or at least accepted by them if he is appointed from outside. If the community rejects him, then he cannot be the Imam.

Eman: (Eemaan) Belief or faith. The root word of Eman is Amuna. It implies three meanings: 1) to believe, 2) to confirm that belief in your heart, and 3) to feel safe. Eman is what makes a person a Muslim. Often spelled "Iman".

Ihsaan: Usually translated as "goodness". The Prophet (p) defined it as knowing that Allah is watching you even though you don't see Him.

Injeel: The Gospel of Prophet 'Esa (Jesus). The New Testament of the Bible is **not** the Gospel of Jesus. The New Testament was written by a lot of different authors and contains stories about Prophet 'Esa, but it is not 'Esa's message. The present New Testament was assembled three hundred years after the time of Prophet 'Esa by a group of white men on a Greek Island who voted on what their "holy" book should contain. Most of the votes were hotly debated! The Roman emperor who ordered them to do it then told all Christians to accept this new compilation of writings. All other Christian writings were ordered to be destroyed. The New Testament contains four books called Gospels: (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). Hundreds more "Gospels" from other authors were burned. A few such as the Gospel of Barnabas and Thomas have survived. The Gospel of Jesus was never written down and is lost.

Insha'llah: If Allah wills.

Iqamah: The second call to prayer just before the actual prayer begins.

Islam: To surrender to Allah and find peace.

Jahannam: Hell.

Jam'a: Together, in a group.

Jannah: Paradise, Heaven. It literally means "the Garden."

Jibra'il: The angel that brought Allah's revelation to the Prophet. Allah is so powerful and majestic that it is beneath him to reveal Himself to humans. We are like an ant next to a star in comparison to Allah. He sends the angels to do these small jobs, though He doesn't need them. In English his name is Gabriel.

Jinn: These are another type of creature Allah created. They are invisible to us but they can see us. They were made from fire elements and thus are pure energy. They are not like ghosts or weird monsters. They can influence your thoughts, encourage you to do wrong, and whisper fears into your mind. They can be good or bad. The good jinn leave us alone. The bad ones, who are also called Shayateen, or Devils, want to destroy you. Astrologers and fortune tellers get their "predictions" and "readings" from them. Jinn spy on the Angels and

learn secrets about the future, then they whisper it into the minds of the fortune tellers. Jinn live, die and have families like us but they exist on another plane altogether. The Prophets could control the Jinn but none of us ordinary people can. Although we believe Jinn can possess a human body, Islam teaches that it's not very common. Don't believe every "Jinn story" Muslim immigrants will tell you about their aunt or second cousin's brother. Most of it will be superstitious stories that are culturally based.

Jumu'ah: The Friday Prayer in which all Muslims gather to hear a sermon called a Khutba. It's time is in place of the Zuhr Salah, usually somewhere between 12 pm and 2 pm. It is mandatory on all men to attend. It is optional for women. The Prophet said if you miss three Jumu'ahs in a row then hypocrisy will start to enter your heart.

Kafir: This means a person who covers up the truth. Usually we say the easier English word "unbeliever." The plural is Kuffar. (Unbelievers.) The noun (unbelief) is Kufr.

Khalifah: This word means Steward, Manager or Care-taker. Allah made humans to be the Khalifah of the earth. In other words, we were given the earth as a trust to take care of. We shouldn't ruin it or pollute it. The head of the Muslim Ummah is also called a Khalifah because he is to take care of the Muslim community. Muslims are supposed to elect a Khalifah, but there hasn't been a world-wide Khalifah for a long time.

Khatib: The person who gives the Khutbah, or Friday sermon. The preacher during Friday services.

Kitabullah: The Book of Allah. (The Qur'an.) The word Kitab means book.

Mahr: The money (or whatever else) that the man has to give to a woman in order to marry her. It is called the marriage-gift and a woman can ask for whatever she wants. If it is money, it can be deferred and paid gradually over time. The husband can never take it away for any reason.

Malik ul Mawt: The Angel of Death.

Masjid: Literally means, "the place of bowing." This is the name for a Muslim prayer hall.

Madh-hab: This means, "School of Thought." In Islam we have the Qur'an, the example of the Prophet and the sayings and guidance of the Prophet's companions. Through the centuries, various Muslim scholars have tried to make those teachings easier for Muslims to live by through organizing them, talking

about them and trying to use those tools to find answers to questions where those first three sources are quiet.

Of course different opinions developed between different scholars and some people chose to follow one scholar or the other. Those differences in ideas about how to follow Islamic rules are called "Schools of Thought." There are five main schools today. Some people say you have to "follow" one of those schools to be a Muslim, but this is not true. You have to follow Islamic teachings but you don't have to put some label on yourself. Each of the five schools is named after the scholar who founded or inspired it. The five are: Maliki, Hanafi, Hanbali, Shaf'i and Jafaari. Most "Shi'a" Muslims follow the Jaafari school. The books and writings of the schools are a good source of information about the particulars of Islam, but our real label is, "I am a Muslim, and only a Muslim." The Shaf'i school is considered the easiest school and the Hanbali is considered the hardest in terms of social and personal rules.

Mecca: (Also spelled Makkah). A city in Arabia founded thousands of years ago by Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham). At that time it was called "Becca." Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was born there in the year 570.

Medina: (Also spelled Madinah). A city about 200 miles north of Mecca. The Prophet established the Islamic community there. He passed away there and is buried there.

Mu'adhan: The person who does the call the prayer.

Mujahid: A person who does Jihad.

Mu'min: A person with Iman. A true believer.

Mus-haf: The Arabic text of the Qur'an. "Brother, hand me a Mus-haf." (Qur'an with the Arabic in it).

Mushrik: A person who commits Shirk (making partners with Allah). Usually an idol-worshipper. A Hindu would be considered a Mushrik because they bow down to statues.

Muslim: A person who surrendered to Allah and is working at finding peace.

Nabi: This term means Prophet.

Nafs: This is often translated as "soul" but it really means "the self," i.e. "You and only you."

Naar: The fire (of Hell).

Nikkah: The wedding ceremony.

Qadr: This term is often translated as "Destiny" or "Pre-destination." This is not entirely accurate. It means literally "to measure." The religious idea behind it is that Allah measured everything in the universe. The length of your life is "measured," as is your fortune and your life's circumstances. Because of the knowledge of Allah, He knows if you will be a believer or a kafir but He doesn't make you be either one of those.

Qadiani: Another name for the sectarian *Ahmadiyya* movement.

Qiblah: The direction of Prayer. All Muslims make their prayers, or *salat*, facing Mecca. Allah commanded us to do this in the Qur'an as a show of unity and to remember Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) who built the first shrine there in that place so many thousands of years ago. Prophet Adam is said to have built an even older shrine many thousands of years before that in that very place.

Qur'an: This is the name of the Book Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammad from the years 610-632. Allah revealed it in stages, one section at a time, as the Muslims were ready to follow it. It has 114 chapters called *surahs*. It was revealed in the Arabic language and has never been lost, changed or edited, like the Bible or Buddhist books have.

We have lots of translations of the Qur'an into English, but a translation can never be as good as the original words and their full meaning. All Muslims try to learn Arabic so they can read the Qur'an. Be advised, there are two different types of Arabic. The first is the language of the Qur'an, in other words, whatever vocabulary words are used in the Qur'an. The second type of Arabic is everyday Arabic, in other words, things that would help you talk about a sports game, a vacation or a day at the office. Many Muslims get bogged down by studying the second type of Arabic. You should work towards the first type if your main goal is to understand the Qur'an.

Ramadan: The ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Muslims are required to fast from before sunrise to sunset every day of this month. There are many details concerning this so consult the section on beliefs and practices.

Rasul: This term means Messenger.

Ruh: Your spirit or soul. Allah gave it to you on loan and thus you had better not sin and dirty it up.

Sadaqah: Charity.

Sahaba: A companion of the Prophet.

Sahabiyat: The female companions of the Prophet.

Sajda: Bowing on the floor in prayer; prostration.

Salafi: This is the name of a group of Muslims who try as hard as they can to imitate the Blessed Prophet in every aspect of life. Their name comes from Salaf, (ancestors) which is a reference to the Sahaba and the generation immediately after them. The Salafis take them as models as well. Sometimes it may seem that the Salafis emphasize the laws and punishments of Islam so much that they make you feel there is no Islamic love and mercy. This is because they are sometimes very zealous in their views. Other Salafis know that the Prophet emphasized the heart and soul more than outward rules. After all, if you don't have love of Allah deep in your heart, you won't follow any rules, no matter how harsh the punishments. The great advantage to listening to the Salafis is that they can always be relied upon to be concerned about what is correct and incorrect. They tend to be conservative on women's issues. Not all Muslims accept many of their more extreme positions.

Salat: (or Salah) This means prayer, the prayer in which you stand, bow and prostrate. The literal meaning of the word is: *to make a connection with*.

Shahadah: The Declaration of Faith. By believing in and declaring the following phrase, a person becomes a Muslim: "Ash hadu an la ilaha illallah, wa ash hadu anna Muhammadar rasulullah." "I declare that there is no god but Allah, and I declare that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." There are other ways to say this formula but this is the most common one. When a person accepts Islam, all his or her past sins are forgiven and his or her record is wiped clean and they start again from that moment as if they were just born.

Shaykh: Literally: Chief or Boss. It is the title that Muslims sometimes give to their scholars. It is not required in Islam but many people like to use this term.

Shari'ah: It is usually translated as Islamic Law. It means the path of Islam.

Shi'a: This is the name of a sect or division in the Muslim community. Shi'aism (Partisanship) began originally as a political protest against the first Khalifah, Abu Bakr but it eventually grew into a separate sect of Muslims with its own version of Islamic teachings. About 10-15% of the world's Muslims are Shi'as. While they are still Muslims and believe in almost everything that Sunnis do,

there are some serious differences in their understanding and practice of Islam vis-à-vis the majority Sunni community.

The biggest group of Shi'as are known as the Twelvers, (they believe in a line of 12 leaders) then there are the Seveners, Isma'ilis, Alawiya and others. The Baha'is came out of the Shi'a community in Iran. (Baha'ism is a religion created in the 1800's in Iran.) The Druze of Syria and Lebanon also came from Shi'aism. All Shi'a groups share a belief that the Prophet's cousin, 'Ali, should have been the first Khalifah, not the fourth, and that only blood relatives of the Prophet Muhammad can be Khalifahs.

Shirk: This is the greatest and most terrible sin. It is the one sin that can keep your soul out of Paradise and doom you to Hellfire. It means making partners with Allah. If a person says that there are many gods, or says that Allah is divided up into different people (such as the Trinity teaching of Christianity) then they are committing Shirk. Allah said it is the one sin He won't forgive if you die while doing it. The Blessed Prophet Muhammad once mentioned also that a person who likes to feel greatness in their heart was also committing a kind of Shirk. This is because all greatness is for Allah and we should always try to be humble. The Prophet also said, "La Yad khulu al Jannah min kana fee qal beehee mith qalu habbatin min kibr." "They won't enter Paradise, the one who has even a little bit of the love of greatness in their heart."

Shaytan: (or Shaytan) It means Satan. (The literal meaning is to separate from.) Islam teaches that a Jinn named Iblis didn't want to bow when Allah commanded a bunch of angels to bow down to Adam in respect of his knowledge. Iblis thought he was better than both humans and angels. Allah banished him to earth and let him have extended life until the Day of Judgment. That is because Iblis challenged Allah and said if he had time he would corrupt all human beings. Iblis's name literally means "Frustrated." He is also known as the Shaytan, or Satan.

Siyam (or Saum) Fasting.

Subhanullah: "Glory to Allah." This phrase is said whenever we're happy or when we see something wonderful.

Sufi: This is the name for a group of Muslims who want to be super-spiritually oriented. Sufis tend to try and be as close to the Sunnah as possible and they like to do group dhikr and chanting. While most Sufis are okay Islamically, there are a few groups that go way out and are close to being outside of Islam. Such far off groups sing, dance, twirl around, drink wine, deny Salat, etc... Most Sufis you will encounter are of the okay kind. They are distinguished by their traditional

Islamic dress and turbans. The word Sufi comes from the term for wool cloth, which was a material early Sufis liked to wear to emphasize how they didn't want to be captured by the love of fineries in this world.

Sufis organize themselves into "orders" or groups, called Tariqas. These groups are headed by a leader called a Shaykh who is considered the most spiritual man with the most Taqwa among them. Some famous Sufi Tariqas that operate all over the world are the Naqshabandis and Qadiriyya. The most famous Sufi Muslim scholars that ever lived are Jalaluddin Rumi, Muhammad al Ghazali and Abdul Qadir Jilani.

Suhoof: "Scrolls." This is the name of the revelation given to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) about 4,000 years ago. It was lost.

Sunnah: The example or "way" of the Prophet. How he lived his life and what his practices were.

Sunni: This is the name of the largest sect or group of Muslims. This group amounts to about 85-90% of all Muslims world-wide. Sunni's believe in the mission of the Prophet as he taught it and try very hard to adhere to the Prophet's example with no changes. This doesn't mean that Sunni's are somehow the only 'true' Muslims, however, because the Prophet never taught that we should even label ourselves Sunni's or Shi'as.

Sunni Islam is just closer to real Islam. The best thing for a Muslim to do is to drop all the labels and just say, "I'm a Muslim." But there are many Muslims in the world who get emotional about wanting to call themselves some kind of label besides the basic, "I'm a Muslim." Have patience with them and do what is right. The term Sunni comes from the title, "Ahl as-Sunnah wal Jam'a" which means, "People of the Example (of the Prophet) and the Main Group (of First Muslims)."

Surah: It is a chapter of the Qur'an. The word literally means "a step up in progression" or a "fence."

Tafseer: Commentary or explanation of the Qur'an. Many Qur'an translations will have footnotes on the bottom of the page to help you understand the meaning of an ayah. That would be called Tafseer.

Taqwa: This term means many things at once. The first meaning is that you are always aware that Allah is watching you. This brings you to the second meaning and that is that you will try to be good always. Do you see how the two things wrapped together can be so beautiful? When a Muslim has Taqwa, we say they are "Aware of Allah" Conscious of Allah" and striving to be righteous.

Tauhid: Sometimes it's spelled Tawhid. It means the Oneness of Allah. Allah has no partners, He is not divided up into parts and He is not in need of anyone to help Him in anything whatsoever.

Taurah: The revelation given to Prophet Musa (Moses). The first five books of the old testament in the Bible are said to be the "Torah" of Moses, but no serious Bible scholar, whether Jewish or Christian believes that anymore. Musa's message was lost long ago. Just take a look, everything about Prophet Moses in the Bible is written in third person: "And Moses said this," and "Moses went there," Someone else wrote those things, certainly not Moses!

Ukhtee: My sister.

Wahy: This word means revelation or inspiration. When Allah was revealing His messages to the Prophet, we would say the Prophet was receiving "Wahy." The Blessed Prophet once said that after him, all Wahy from Allah was finished except for one thing: dreams that can come true.

Wudu: Washing for prayer.

Yowm ul Qiyamah: The Day of Judgment. (Literally: Day of Standing.)

Zabur: The revelation given to Prophet Dawud (David). The Psalms in the Bible are not the pure Zabur. Christian scholars admit that at least half of the verses in Psalms were written by temple priests, government workers, etc, in ancient Israel. And no one knows which half are from Prophet Dawud and how many have been lost or altered.

Zakah: This is often translated as "Charity" or "Poor-due" but the literal meaning of the word is actually, "Purifying." Zakah is the third pillar of Islam. It involves giving 2.5% of your yearly wealth, after expenses, for the benefit of the poor and the needy. The "purifying" part comes in by learning not to be greedy. If you give some of your money for the sake of Allah to the poor, you make your heart less prone to greed.